

carnal, worldly appetite. He is not looking for the reward of heaven; he wants the instant gratification of fawning human praise.

Likewise, one who craves earthly treasures finds himself in the same spiritual fix as the scribes and Pharisees. What good will silver and gold do any man in the hereafter? Moth and rust destroy all material things. Even science acknowledges this in the *Second Law of Thermodynamics* called the *Law of Entropy*. Why then do so many people who claim to love the Lord fix their eyes on earthly treasure? When Jesus says that the eye is the lamp of the body, He clearly means that one will pursue whatever his eye focuses on. The man who can see heaven in his mind's eye will want to go there, but the man who can only see the sparkle of gold, or the praise of men, will turn his attentions to those things.

Seek first the kingdom of God (6:25-34). Chapter six draws to a close with this timeless exhortation. People generally worry about the wrong things. Jesus said his disciples should not do this. The "Gentiles" worry about such unimportant things as food, clothing and shelter. The Lord's point is obvious, is it not? God wants His people to focus on heaven, not on the more mundane things of life. Birds of the heavens and flowers of the field both go about doing what they do (birds fly, and flowers grow, show pretty colors, and smell nice) and God cares for them and their needs. Why should disciples, who have committed themselves to the Lord's service, think that they need to help God along by obsessing about less important matters than discipleship and going to heaven someday? If God feeds birds through nature, why would we not expect our needs to be met sufficiently with the resources of the world? What can't be supplied however, is righteousness. It is not forced upon us. We must choose it, and we must follow it.

(Conclusion next week)

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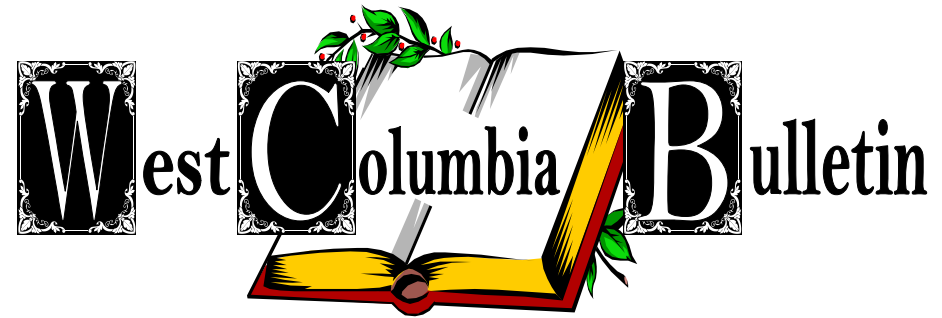
Schedule Of Services...

Sunday:

Bible Classes	9:00 a.m.
Worship	9:50 a.m.
Worship	6:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Classes	7:00 p.m.
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August 2, 2020

The Sermon on the Mount (2)

David Weak

We continue our examination of the Sermon on the Mount in this edition of the Bulletin. Last week we took a look at the Lord's actions when He preached the famous sermon, and then we began to examine some of the themes Jesus preached.

Remember, please, that Jesus' main theme was *true righteousness*. His aim was to contrast the true righteousness that He required of His disciples with the false self-righteousness of the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees (5:20).

A disciple's service must not be for the approval of men (6:1-4). As chapter six opened, Jesus addressed a trait

of hypocrites: they are typically happy to offer alms, but they want the approval of men for doing their good deeds. Jesus condemned this desire in men. A disciple does his charitable deeds for the Lord's approval and for the good of men, not for the approval of men. Figuratively speaking, Jesus said one's right hand should not know what the left hand is doing (vs. 3).

Prayer is an act of devotion, it is not a show (6:5-8). Jesus said that "the hypocrites" love the attention and praise of men so much that they prayed in open places, hoping to draw the attention of men (vs. 5). Also, they used vain repetitions, thinking that

high and pious sounding speeches would be interpreted by observers as holy petitions to God (vs. 7). What Jesus taught was that sincere prayers were to be offered to God as praise and not for the judgment of men. It would be better, Jesus said, to pray in one's closet than to pray in the open if one merely wanted praise from an audience (vs. 5-6). Nor should one use vain repetitions in prayer. Vain repetitions are words without meaning. They are merely words repeated for repetition's sake. Vain repetitions could also be the "canned" prayers of Catholicism. Reciting memorized words from a "prayer book" is not really a prayer.

The Bible doesn't ever teach us to recite pre-written, church-approved, memorized prayers. That is a human practice. Still, some point to the Sermon on the Mount and insist that Jesus gave us what the world calls "*The Lord's Prayer*" (6:9-13). It is inferred that Jesus wanted his disciples to pray these exact words daily. However, if you carefully read the text, Jesus implied nothing of the sort. What Jesus

actually said was: "*In this manner, therefore, pray: ...*" (vs. 9).

What, then, was Jesus teaching His disciples to do? He was teaching them ***HOW*** to pray, ***NOT*** the exact words to pray. An acceptable prayer should *hallow* (to revere or set aside as holy) the name of the Father in heaven (vs. 9). One should pray for the Lord's kingdom and that His will to be done (vs. 10). He should pray for his daily necessities (vs. 11). He should ask God for forgiveness (vs. 12). And he should petition God for help with temptation and sin (vs. 13). All of these elements of an acceptable prayer, including intercessions and thanksgivings (1 Timothy 2:1) can be worded in very personal ways as the occasion of a prayer dictates. But, to stress that precisely memorized words must be recited daily is without Biblical merit.

Fasting (6:16-18). The next lesson in Jesus' sermon is about fasting. Fasting, was not a regular part of the Old Testament rituals. However, there were occasionally important duties during which Jews were to "afflict their

souls" such as on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29; 23:29). To afflict one's soul was to fast. In Joel 2:12, fasting was prescribed as a penance for national sin.

When it comes to the New Testament law, there is no specific law concerning fasting, but the Lord recognizes in the Sermon on the Mount that some people did from time to time fast as a matter of private obligation toward God. Even today, one might forego eating for a period of time while in grief, intense Bible study, or prayer. Technically speaking, this is what fasting was - refraining from food and drink during a time of service toward God.

Jesus was concerned with teaching His audience the proper attitude when one fasted. In our day, whenever someone fasts (or diets), such as before a medical procedure, the one who is fasting makes sure everyone knows just how miserable he or she is. It's not uncommon for such a person to moan miserably: "I haven't had a bite to eat since ten o'clock last night. I'm just about to starve to death!" Jesus said this is not how one ought

to behave when fasting in devotion to God. Jesus noted that the hypocrites, the scribes and Pharisees, disfigured their faces, so that everyone would know that they were suffering for righteousness sake.

Actually, what the scribes and Pharisees were doing had nothing to do with righteousness, and everything to do with "self-righteousness." The praise of men would be the only reward they would receive (vs. 16). What a disciple who fasted should have done was wash his face, anoint his head, clean himself up, and give no indication of his hunger or thirst to passersby. All that mattered was the fasting was an act of devotion was between the disciple and God (vs. 17-18).

Earthly vs. heavenly treasure (6:19-21). The problem with hypocritical pharisaical righteousness is that it sought earthly satisfaction. But, Jesus said that a disciple's treasure is in heaven. Those who craved the praise of people would have only that as their reward. Jesus taught this consistently. By extension, any disciple today who looks for the praise of men has the same